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## **Housing and immigrants – consumer aspects of the meaning of the home**

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### **Abstract**

Housing research of recent years has approached consumption by focusing on the meaning and the use of the home and by focusing on housing preferences for different consumer groups. In parallel there has been research on immigrants' housing, however, much of this has focused on social problems of deprived areas. This paper combines the two approaches theoretically and raises questions of how a consumer-based approach to the question of immigrants' housing situation can enrich the field of housing research in general as well as the studies of immigrants' housing. The paper is thus primarily a theoretical paper combining approaches and raising questions for further empirical investigation, however it also includes examples from an empirical pilot study with a few qualitative interviews on the subject.

### **1. Introduction**

For the last decade some housing research has been developed in a consumer perspective, focusing on the housing preferences of different consumer groups and on the meaning of 'home' to these different groups. Other parts of the housing research have focused on housing problems among immigrants and refugees, especially those living in deprived housing areas. In this paper we will combine the two approaches. Thus we will examine, to what extent the ideas of good housing are culturally dependent and what the concept 'home' means to different groups of immigrants.

In the past different sociological categories have been used to find differences in the understanding of the meaning of home; class distinction, gender, education, lifestyle. In this paper we argue that the sociological categories of ethnicity and nationality could be fruitful as well. This implies that the concept of home will be pushed to the edge. To immigrants and refugees who have left their native country and might have lost their former house, the concept of 'home' might have a special value. Thus the study of immigrants' attachment to their home might not only tell us about the cultural impact on the concept of home, it might also be a way to achieve improved understanding of the meaning of home in general.

By combining the approaches as described above, the main questions we would like to raise in this article are:

- Do immigrants feel at home in several places (their country of residence and their country of origin), and does this affect their relation to their home in the country of residence?
- To what extent are the ideas of good housing culturally dependent? Are the residences available in Denmark culturally biased in ways that do not meet the needs of some types of immigrants?
- Are immigrants a special (or several special) consumer groups with other and maybe restricted access to parts of the housing market and with special preferences?
- What are the positive and negative approaches to ghettos in the sense of housing areas with a socially and culturally homogeneous population?

The focus on immigrants involves the use of terms and concepts which we need to define before continuing: *Immigrants* are persons born in another country – by foreign parents (Poulsen and Lange, 1998). Some immigrants have chosen to immigrate of their own free will, while others are *refugees*, who have been forced to leave their home-country because of religious or political reasons (Büdrikow 1987). This means, that refugees are a – smaller or larger - subset of the immigrants. This is not the case with the *descendants*, or second-generation immigrants, who are persons, born in Denmark with immigrant parents.

Terms such as *ethnic*, *ethnic group* and *ethnicity* are more unclear and hard to define. Frederic Boal (Boal, 2000) quotes Richard Schermerhorn, saying that an ethnic group is a “collectivity within a larger society having real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements as the epitome of their peoplehood”. For a more precise definition of ethnic group Boal makes a list of attributes of an ethnic group: Members will share certain basic cultural values; they will have a common origin or myth of origin and a sense of shared past; they will be biologically self-reproducing; they will make up a network of contact among themselves; and finally, they are categories of ascription by others and of self-identification by the members themselves. Boal concludes that an ethnic group will define itself in a matter of contrast: an ethnic group consists of self conscious members, seeing themselves and the group as distinct to outsiders.

The term *race* is closely connected to ethnicity, but still ethnicity and race are not the same. Boal defines the difference this way (Boal, 2000): While the ethnic group are distinguished by socially selected cultural traits, the racial group are distinguished by socially selected physical traits. The physical traits can be those of skin pigmentation, hair texture, facial features, stature and the like.

In countries with a long history of immigration a well-known phenomenon is that immigrants settle in certain housing areas – close to fellow-countrymen. In the literature of recent years these housing areas have been called *enclaves* (Andersen, 2006b). Andersen describes enclaves as an area with a social network among people from a certain ethnic group. In contrast to *ghettos*, the residents of the enclaves have chosen the housing area voluntarily (Andersen, 2000b).

In the following part 2) we will first present different theoretical approaches from the literature to 'the meaning of home'. After this description of the meaning of home in general, we will 3) focus on the literature on immigrants: What does the term 'home' mean to immigrants and do the immigrants have special preferences on the housing market? The following part 4) describes the Danish context and the history of immigration in Denmark. Finally we will 5) describe a study which we will carry out at the Danish Building Research Institute in the coming year. We will describe the objective and the methods of the study, and

give some insights from an empirical pilot study with a few qualitative interviews with Turkish households.

## **2. Housing research and the meaning of the home**

The international housing research can be divided into at least three different approaches, firstly quantitative economic or demographic studies on housing and moving patterns (see for instance (Clark et al, 1984; Littlewood and Munro, 1997)), secondly a quantitative approach to understanding cultural differences in housing consumption and preferences (see for instance (Saunders, 1989; Ærø, 2006)) and thirdly a qualitative phenomenological approach on the meaning of the home to its residents (Després, 1991). Much housing research, however, can be criticized for being too policy oriented and thus less oriented towards theoretical interests (Clapham, 2005). This is for instance often seen in the papers presented at the European Housing Research Network (ENHR) conferences.

To introduce a more theoretical approach, Clapham suggests a pathway approach in housing studies, following individuals and households in their changing living conditions resulting from changes in work and family life (Clapham, 2005). In such a pathway approach it is important to understand different "times", including the age of the individual, the lifecycle of the household and the time of the cohorts for the individuals and households and their historically specific contexts. Furthermore Clapham criticizes that much of the quantitative housing research uses rationalistic understandings of housing choices and objective criteria for what good housing is. Objective categories in housing for instance focus on the size of and installations in the home, however, this is not necessarily the best criteria for what different types of residents consider as housing qualities. The question of what good housing or housing problems are thus needs research based on more qualitative methods and the remaining part of this section will focus on insights from this type of research.

A central question in a qualitative approach to housing studies is the question of how the concept of the home relates to the physical dwelling. In much housing research the notion of home is often linked directly to the dwelling, however one can also feel at home at other places. Shelley Mallet quotes from Hollander (1991) that home can be perceived as concentric circles where each circle represents existential meaning, including for instance the dwelling, the neighbourhood, the family, other social environments, workplace or the nation (Mallet, 2004). Following this, Mallet also raises the question of whether 'home' is a place, a space, a feeling, a praxis or a way of being in the world. Mallet's own answer is that 'home' can be any of these (Mallet, 2004).

The strong link between home and residence today in the western world can be traced back to the seventeenth century and the bourgeoisie homes with their strong focus on family life (Somerville, 1997). Mallet quotes from Rybczynski that particularly the seventeenth century fostered the ideas of privacy, intimacy and comfort and made these strong organizing principles for furnishing homes. Even today we can find these principles as strong ideas of how to furnish a home (Mallet, 2004). John Burnett (1978) describes how this idea grows even stronger in the end of the 1800s when the newly established middle-classes needed a codex for how to settle. Family life was woven into a morally religious codex, and the family home arose as an almost sacred place. Following this we have later seen how the modern welfare states worked with the nuclear family in private homes as a basic social unit, and a cornerstone in building a healthy and civilized society (Bech-Danielsen, 2004).

Today we still find conservative political forces promoting family values through housing policy (Clapham, 2005), and we find economic forces promoting the dream of the ideal home (Chapman, 1999). The consumer, however, is not a mere victim of societal forces. The dream of nuclear family life in ideal homes also comes from inside the consumer, and most people live somewhere in between the real settlement and the dream of the ideal (Mallet, 2004). This also means that all people are limited by what is actually available at the housing market, and therefore limited by both present and historic political, cultural and economic factors governing housing construction. This historical perspective on how home and housing has been strongly linked through the last centuries indicates that the meaning of home and questions of what is good housing are socially constructed more than they depend on universal deep human needs (Somerville, 1997).

An often cited review article by Carole Després uses a phenomenological perspective to gather all the different meanings of the home for its inhabitants (Després, 1991). These meanings include home as security and control, as reflection of one's ideas and values, as something to act upon and modify, as permanence and continuity, as relationship with family and friends, as a centre of activities, as a refuge from the outside world, as an indicator of personal status, as a material structure and as a place to own. The article has been criticized for its lack of theoretical understanding and for claiming socially constructed values to be universal (Somerville, 1997). It has also been criticized for only focusing on the positive aspects of the home, and thus ignoring domestic violence and domination of women and children in the patriarchal home (Mallet, 2004). Those criticizing the article, however, in their own review articles use several of the same categories. Peter Somerville thus argues that the concepts of privacy, identity and familiarity are essential in the understanding of the home and his argument for these three concepts are that they relate to spatial, psychological and social conditions, each of these being necessary dimensions in the concept of home (Somerville, 1997)

Another approach to understanding the meaning of the home comes from the Norwegian anthropologist Marianne Gullestad, who argues that everyday life is crucial in combining all the activities we perform every day in different sectors of society (Gullestad, 1989). According to Gullestad everyday life contains two dimensions; on one hand the practical organisation of activities, and on the other hand the knowledge and recognition which follows from carrying through these activities. In both dimensions the home has a key position in efforts to create cohesion in a fragmented everyday life. According to space and time structures, the home is centrally placed in everyday life and even though the home is not necessarily the place where most hours are spent, the home is where we depart from and where we return to. This means the home is not only important in the daily organisation of everyday life, it is also a fundamental aspect of how we perceive and recognize the world.

Above we have summarized studies focusing on housing consumption. Another approach is to focus on the main lines in consumer theories and then apply these to the housing field. An important aspect of consumer theories relates to the question of conspicuous consumption and how goods are used to show status and class belonging (Bourdieu, 1984). As the biggest asset in private households, both in a physical and financial sense, the house is clearly also used as a status object. More recent consumer studies however question the strong focus on conspicuous consumption and emphasize the more routine aspects (Gronow and Warde, 2001). Furthermore recent consumer research has also put more effort into understanding the relation between the goods and the consumer. Colin Campbell talks about how the 'craft

consumer', through the consumption process, designs, redesigns and decorates goods such as the home (Campbell, 2005) and Kaj Ilmonen, describes the process of appropriating goods and how the consumer, through working with and changing goods, makes them an important part of human life, not only as objects, but also as something that has special meaning to us (Ilmonen, 2004). In line with this we have previously shown how families chose type of residence and decorate their homes following very class-based structures in choosing where to live, but using more craft-consumer oriented approaches in the interior decoration (Gram-Hanssen and Bech-Danielsen, 2004).

In this section a review of research within the field of housing consumption and the meaning of the home in general has been presented. In the following section this will be used as a basis for a review of literature focusing more explicitly on the question of the meaning of the home among immigrants. In this we envisage that there are differences relating to the meaning of the home depending on the cultural background of the resident and depending on the situation of having moved far from one's country of origin, either forced as a refugee or freely as an immigrant.

### **3. Immigrants and the meaning of home**

Different individuals find different meaning in the concept of home. This depends on sex, age and personal history, but also social and cultural backgrounds have a great influence. Thus in the literature (Lewin, 2001), the concept of home among immigrants is described as being developed as a mix between the culture of the native country and the culture of the new settlement. Therefore immigrants having a background in a culture far away from Western influences might put quite another meaning in the notion of 'home'. Could this be the cause to some conflicts in housing areas, where people with different cultural backgrounds are living next to each other?

In Denmark and probably also in other Western countries the importance of the home has increased during the last decades and this is reflected in the growing number of television programmes and magazines on interior decoration etc. However, some research states that the meaning of the home is even more crucial to immigrants (Lewin, 2001). It is argued, that housing plays an important role in the integration of immigrants; it is of great importance to immigrants to find an adequate, appropriate and affordable house, where the life in a new settlement can start. The house is the 'residence', which lays down the framework for activity and experience in the everyday life.

In continuation of this, it is argued that the meaning of home as security (as described above, (Carole Depres 1991) established 'security' as an important meaning of home) can be of special importance to immigrants and refugees. Ethnic minorities see their home as a place of refuge; a retreat from the challenges in the new society (Andersen 2006b). Furthermore it is argued by Andersen, that ethnic minorities put great meaning into the home in relation to establishing a close-knit family, and therefore immigrants spend more time in their home than an average Dane (Andersen, 2006b).

The home might also play an important role in the process of integration. Anthropologists describe the home as a micro-cosmos reflecting the most important concepts and values of the surrounding culture (Gullestad, 1989). Therefore, to the newcomers, the home can be an important place to experience the values and lifestyles of the new culture. For instance social

relations between men and women as well as relations between generations can be experienced in the design of the house. On the other hand, the immigrants might find it hard to live in Danish houses, reflecting a lifestyle very different from their own.

Other research (Murdie 2004) suggests that immigrants from less modern societies put less importance to the concept of home. Murdie quotes Moore (2000), saying that the home as the domain of privacy is a less dominant concept among immigrants coming from non-individualistic cultures. This argument finds support in a historic perspective from Western culture. In Western countries during the 19th century the 'home' was understood as one's country of origin rather than one's private house (Moore, 2000; Burnett, 1978). Only later have private spaces been created within dwellings and the house has become a place of intimacy and privacy.

Finally, in continuation of this, it can be argued, that the meaning of home among immigrants should not be discussed as 'either less or more'. Instead the meaning of 'home' among different ethnic groups can simply be seen as being different. Thus Somerville (Somerville, 2000) argues that different ethnic groups find different meaning in the concept of home. Consequently an understanding of the native culture is necessary to get an understanding of the apparent concept of home among immigrants.

According to Amos Rapoport (Rapoport, 1982) 'home' also have different meanings inside each ethnic group. By way of example Rapoport refers to young versus old people from India. To young Indians, the pattern of settlements is seen as an expression of identity. This is not the case among the older Indians (Rapoport, 1982).

Nevertheless, to leave your native culture and to become integrated in a new society can be seen as a process of changing identity. Living in a society where the cultural values are drastically different than your own and where your behaviour is constantly questioned, will - sooner or later - influence your own values and your own behaviour. Therefore, to some extent the loss of 'familiarity' that is experienced by immigrants and refugees outside their country of origin results in a loss of identity (Somerville, 1997). To settle in a new society and to become integrated in a new culture means that your personal identity changes. You may have to say goodbye to values and traditions connected to your origin, and you will be influenced by values and customs in the new society.

In the introduction to the book, *Migrants of Identity. Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* Nigel Rapport and Andrew Dawson propound that immigrants' existence on the move and refugees' existence in exile are like an image of modernity. As an immigrant and a refugee you have left your roots of origin, and still you might not feel quite familiar with the new society. This is the nature of modernity - to quote Marchall Berman: 'To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are' (Berman, 1988, p.15).

Berman's description of modernity has similarities to the situation of immigrants. They are often aiming for utopia in a new culture, and they sometimes end up with nostalgic memories of their origin. Thus, in a study (Necef, 1992) on Turkish immigrants in Denmark it was concluded that many Turks had a nostalgic relationship to Turkey, and in other research (Christensen, 2001) it is established, that immigrants often find it hard to cut the bonds to the native country.

There is a risk that immigrants become torn between two cultures – the culture of the past (the culture of origin) and the lifestyle of the present (the new culture). This can be described as an 'identity of diaspora', splitting the immigrants between the former country and the new country. 'Diaspora' is the Jewish word for having a home in more than one place (Schwartz, 1997). Thus some immigrants and refugees might relate the concept of home to a previous house or a native village rather than their current apartment in a Western social housing area.

Diaspora is often seen as a barrier to integration. Settling in the new society is difficult if the immigrant has a desire to return to the native country. Therefore in the literature 'home' is closely linked to resettlement and seen as an important indicator of immigrants' integration in the new society (Murdie, 2004, p.3). Deep down, integration is a matter of familiarity and a matter of feeling at home.

Nevertheless, immigrants often settle among other immigrants (see next part of this paper), and they often feel membership of a certain ethnic group. To a certain degree this means that they cling to the identity of the native culture. In this context it is noteworthy that identity is developed by making distinctions: Identity arises when someone differentiates himself/herself from the surroundings and defines himself/herself as 'something else' (Rapoport, 1982, p.12). Basically, this is the well known distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Boal, 2000, p.5). In this definition of identity, it is closely connected to ethnicity. To claim the existence of an ethnic group is to distinguish the members of the group from others. Again it is a matter of drawing a boundary between 'us' and 'them'. Boal concludes that ethnic groups see themselves as 'distinct', and that an ethnic group cannot exist in isolation.

Following this theoretical review of questions relating specifically to the meaning of home among emigrants, we will now continue with an empirical overview of emigration to Denmark and knowledge about the emigrants' housing situation.

#### **4. Immigrants and refugees in Denmark**

Denmark has always experienced immigration. For centuries Dutch, Germans, French, Poles, Russians, Swedes and others have moved to Denmark (Sane, 2000) - often they were invited by the Danes because of the need of working capacity, at other times they came as refugees, forced to leave their home-country for religious or political reasons (Büdnikow, 1987). Of course this tendency increased in the 20th century. Modernity and urbanization set people on the move, and while a lot of Danes moved to America, people from other nations settled in Denmark.

In the first decades after the Second World War, immigration to Denmark primarily consisted of political refugees from Eastern Europe, starting in 1956 with refugees from Hungary (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). Nevertheless, it was in the late 1960s that immigration really gained pace. The economic growth and the lack of working capacity in Denmark resulted in immigration of 30,000-40,000 people per year. This immigration first came from Turkey and the former Yugoslavia, later Pakistanis and people from African countries like Morocco and Algeria followed (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). These 'guest workers' were usually single men, or men who left their families in the native country.



In 1973 the Danish government stopped further immigration. The oil crisis had caused a temporary break in the economic growth, and the Turkish and the Yugoslavian immigrants were among the first to become unemployed. This was one of the reasons, that 'the strangers' became a topic on the Danish political scene. A new law made it much harder to obtain a residency permit and a work permit in Denmark, and the wave of immigration stopped for a while. In the next two decades immigration to Denmark mainly consisted of refugees – first the political refugees from Chile (after Pinochet's military coup in 1973), then the 'boat-refugees' from Vietnam from 1975 (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). In the 1980s the refugees primarily came from Iran and Iraq, for religious or political reasons and because of the war between the two countries from 1980-1988 (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004). During the civil war in Sri Lanka (1983-1984) Tamil refugees also came to Denmark, and throughout the 1980s Palestinians came to Denmark. In the 1990s the refugees primarily came from the former Yugoslavia and from Somalia - both places as a result of civil wars (Fenger-Grøn & Grøndahl, 2004).

Today, immigration to Denmark has a lot of similarities to the situation in 1969-1973. The demographic development in Denmark and the economic growth mean that an import of working capacity is needed again. This time the immigrants typically come from the former Eastern European countries, Poland in particular. In 2006 approx. 46,500 immigrants came to Denmark (Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, 2007). Of these only 1,100 people came as refugees (Ministry of Refugee, Immigration and Integration Affairs, 2007) - from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and former Yugoslavia.

Thus the immigrants in Denmark represent different ethnic groups with different cultural and personal backgrounds. Some research has been carried out in order to map the way they settle in the Danish society. In a study (based on statistical data and surveys) focusing on the housing situation of immigrants in Danish social housing, Andersen concludes, that the ethnic groups are unequally distributed in Denmark. Often they live in urbanised areas, and they very rarely live in smaller villages and rural areas (Andersen, 2006a). Furthermore many immigrants are settled in ethnic enclaves with a high concentration of people coming from the same culture as themselves.

The appearance of ethnic enclaves can have many reasons. First of all the network and the social resources of the immigrants are relatively weak, and therefore they often have difficulties achieving an appropriate and affordable house in Denmark. The result is that many immigrants end up in housing estates, where the waiting lists are relatively short, and which for all practical purposes this means in housing estates with a high concentration of unemployment, crime and other social problems. This might cause some problems in the process of integration. In another survey from 2006 Andersen found that immigrants living in Danish social housing were dissatisfied with the reputation of their housing area (Andersen, 2006b).

In Denmark most immigrants settle in social housing. 60 per cent of the immigrants live in social housing (Andersen, 2006a) compared with only 20 per cent of Danes. And 22 per cent of the immigrants live in housing areas where more than 40 per cent of the residents have an ethnic background other than Danish. This stresses the fact that immigrants live in ethnic enclaves.

The existence of ethnic enclaves might involve some problems in the process of integration. Immigrants and refugees can live in Denmark for years with only few contacts to Danes.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, Andersen (Andersen, 2006a) suggests, that the ethnic enclaves can also have a positive effect in the process of integration. Living close to fellow-countrymen, who are already well established in Denmark can be a great help in getting knowledge of Danish society, and the network of friends or family might be useful in finding a job. This might be another reason, why many immigrants live in ethnic enclaves.

A third reason is that many immigrants want to live in an area where they do not feel too much of a stranger. In his research on the housing situation of black Caribbeans in England, Frederick Boal found that most of the Caribbeans do not want to live in areas dominated by white Englishmen. The black Caribbeans argued that it would make them feel like strangers in their own living area. Surrounded by familiarity they felt more 'at home' in their neighbourhood (Boal, 2000, p.269).

Andersen (Andersen, 2006a) concludes the same in his research: What matters most when ethnic minorities choose to live in Danish social housing is that there is an ethnic environment of a certain size. Thus half of the ethnic immigrants living in Danish social housing have chosen their dwelling because they have friends and/or family in the area, and every third because they like having many fellow residents with the same ethnic background as themselves (Andersen, 2006b).

On the other hand immigrants want to live among Danes. Only very few immigrants want to live in an area with a minority of Danes. One-third think that at least half of the residents in the area ought to be Danes, and one-third think that immigrants should make up no more than one-third of the residents. The final one-third place no importance on the number of Danes/immigrants. These figures are closely related to the process of integration. Typically, immigrants who are relatively weakly integrated find it most important to have friends or family in their neighbourhood (Andersen, 2006a).

Half of Danes live in detached houses, typically owner-occupied housing. In these housing areas ethnic minorities are underrepresented (Andersen, 2006a). This might indicate a lack of integration - home ownership is connected not only to wealth accumulation but also to putting down roots, committing, and by extension to social integration (Murdie, 2004, p.5). Nevertheless, a survey from 2006 (Andersen, 2006a) concluded, that 74 per cent of ethnic people moving from social housing in Denmark prefer to live in a detached house. A survey from 2001 stated that this is also the case among average Danes: 78 per cent of Danes wanting to move prefer to live in a detached house (SBI and AKF, 2001). The same surveys find, that ethnic people in Denmark have the same needs to become a home-owner (73 per cent) as average Danes (72 per cent). The fact that the ethnic groups are overrepresented in social housing and underrepresented in detached houses stresses the importance of social, financial, economic and political conditions on the housing market.

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<sup>1</sup> In the following we use the term 'Danes', for the residents born in Denmark by Danish parents in contrast to immigrants and descendants. Of course this is not completely correct, as immigrants and descendants might be Danish citizens as well.

## **5. Our study – design, objective and preliminary results**

This paper is the kick-start to a study which will be carried out at the Danish Building Research Institute in 2007-2008. The study is part of a larger research project focusing on conflicts (and solutions of conflicts) among immigrants and refugees in social housing. In this context our specific study will focus on 'the meaning of home'. What is the meaning of home to different ethnic groups – and can conflicts in social housing estates be understood as an expression of different peoples' varying idea of the concept of 'home'? Are some conflicts basically rooted in different expectations of what a home and a housing area should be?

The study will include twelve in-depth interviews – nine interviews with families coming from three different nationalities and three interviews with Danish families. Each interview is expected to last for two hours, they will be recorded electronically and afterwards thematically referred, partly transcribed and analyzed.

The weakness of the qualitative interview is the limited number of interviews. The interviewed residents do not in any way represent ethnic residents in Denmark. Nevertheless, the strength of the limited number of qualitative interviews is that you get in-depth information on opinions from individuals and a richness of detail and narrative. This way, our qualitative study has to be seen in connection to the quantitative studies of the larger research projects.

Ethnic people from Iraq, Somalia and Turkey have been chosen for the interviews (three families from each group). These three groups have been chosen because they represent different topics in the question of integration. Somalis and Iraqis came to Denmark recently. This means, that they have only just settled, and that they have the challenges of integration and the problems of leaving the native home close in mind. Furthermore Somalis and Iraqis are the two ethnic groups having most difficulties in getting settled in Denmark. In his research Andersen compares the level of integration among different ethnic groups in Denmark, and he concludes that signs of disintegration are highest among Somalis and Iraqis.

Also with regard to creating a new 'home' in Denmark and leaving a native home, Somalis and Iraqis are of special interest - and quite interesting to compare. The Iraqis seem to be strongly rooted in Iraq, having a strong feeling of diaspora. This might be one of the reasons why Iraqis have difficulties becoming integrated in Denmark. To the Somalis diaspora is definitely not the issue. Paradoxically, even though Somalis are the weakest integrated ethnic group in Danish society, at the same time they are the group with the lowest signs of diaspora (Andersen, 2006a). Nevertheless, the private home is very important to Somalis, especially the feeling of security and safety connected to the home (Murdie, 2004, p.9). According to Murdie this is caused by the fact that the Somalis are refugees from devastated areas.

Turks are one of the largest ethnic groups in Denmark. Turks have typically been in Denmark for 30-40 years. According to Peter Somerville the attachment to one's home increases with the length of residence (Somerville 1997, p.229). This is mainly because the home is an embodiment of last memories, he explains. Therefore it is not surprising that Turks are actually well integrated in Danish society (2006a). The interview of the Turks will focus on the process of integration – from arrival Denmark and up till now. Where is 'home' today? What do they miss from their native country? Is it possible for Turks to feel at home in Danish social housing? In what sense are Turkish culture / Danish culture visible in the interior and home-decorating?

The three ethnic groups will be found where they are typically settled - in the enclaves of respectively Somalis, Iraqis and Turks. In each of these enclaves, four families will be interviewed; three families from the dominant ethnic group of the area and one Danish family. The object of the interviews with the Danish families is to elucidate how the 'feeling of home' of the Danes and their attachment to the housing area are influenced by the presence of the dominant ethnic group. How do the Danish families experience the ethnic groups in their neighbourhood? The atmosphere among the different groups and the communication between the groups can be crucial to the experience in the neighbourhood. Also the interviews with the Danish families are meant as a standard of reference in the analysis of the ethnic groups.

In the following we will give some insights from the first three interviews, including two interviews with Turkish households and one with a Danish household, all living in the same neighbourhood in a suburban block built in 1972. Contact with the interviewees was made through clubs and social workers in the area. Two of the interviews were recorded, but the Turk did not want us to record the interview because she felt ashamed of her bad Danish (which was not grammatically correct but quite understandable). In this case the analysis is based on our notes during and immediately after the interview combined with some written statements/answers which the interviewee had prepared before the interview with help from her grow-up daughter.

The interviews may be biased, especially those with the immigrant, as those accepting to be interviewed were probably the most integrated in Danish society. Furthermore we had a feeling that they felt an obligation to represent other immigrants in the neighbourhood and thus give the most positive impression of being well integrated and happy to live in Denmark. Still the interviews provide interesting knowledge of how questions of home and housing may be influenced by ethnicity and cultural background. In the following we will present some preliminary results from these first interviews dealing with the question of where interviewees feel at home, the importance of being among followers in the neighbourhood and finally questions of how the physical design of these blocks conflicts with the immigrants' ideas of a good dwelling based on a partly different cultural background.

The question of feeling at home is answered very differently in the three interviews. In one of the Turkish families, the man explains that he came to Denmark with his parents thirty years ago when he was teenager. All the years he has stayed in the same neighbourhood in Denmark. His parents went back to Turkey some years ago, but to him Denmark is where he feels at home: *"I feel more Danish than Turkish. When I go on holiday in Turkey, I do that every second year for four weeks.... after two weeks I start to think about when are we going home. That is because the system there does not fit me well"*. In the other Turkish family the women came to Denmark fifteen years ago when she was thirty years old. She still has a home in Turkey, and she explains that 'home' for her is both places. When she is in her house in Turkey she can miss her Danish home and when she is in Denmark she can miss the Turkish. This woman also explains how an earthquake in Turkey some years ago destroyed her parental home completely, and this means that both her Danish and her own Turkish home has got an even stronger meaning for her. Furthermore she also explains that she might wish to go back to stay permanently in Turkey in her old age, however, her two daughters feel like Danes, so probably she will stay in Denmark to be close to them.

Of the three families, the Danish family feels the least at home in the neighbourhood. They have only lived there a few years and they hope they will be able to move to another area within some years. This family used to own their own terraced house, but because of an accident and illness they had to sell it and lost a lot of money. They do not expect to be able to buy a house again. They moved into this area because their previous apartment in another social housing block became too small when they were expecting their second child and now where they are expecting again, they are happy about the size of their apartment but have much more mixed feelings about the neighbourhood. They describe that they sometimes feel insecure walking in the area in the evening and their 7-year-old boy seldom goes out on his own, even in daytime. Groups of young immigrant boys calling after those walking by makes them feel insecure, however, the family also emphasize that the boys do not actually do anything if you just ignore them. On the one hand this family describes how they experience problems in the area and on the other hand they also describe how the reputation of their neighbourhood is much worse than it deserves. This in itself can be a problem because they have to explain to their friends and family how they can live 'in such a place'.

Another problem mentioned often in the interview with the Danish family concerns garbage and litter in the common areas and in their own little garden. Quite often, they say, some of their neighbours just throw garbage out of the window, and they have several times found used nappies in their garden. On the other hand extreme cleanliness can also be a problem as they describe how some of the immigrants living above them might use a lot of water to clean their balcony, and all this water inevitably runs down on their terrace. Sometimes some of their neighbours also use chemicals to clean with and this smells bad, as does some of the food they cook. To our question of whether they ever complain to their neighbours, the husband tells that if he knows who to blame he will not hesitate to knock on their door and bawl them out. He says he almost hit a child once who had stolen or perhaps just played with his son's toy.

Actually it is interesting that cleanliness becomes a subject in all three interviews without being part of our interview guide – it seems that cleanliness is an important factor in relation to home and housing both for the Turkish and the Danish families. From the Danish family it is clear that there are problems of litter and garbage in the staircase and the surroundings, whereas cleanliness in their own home is not mentioned during the interview. In both of the Turkish interviews the importance of having a clean home is emphasised and connected to the pride of the housewife, and one of the women explains how she had difficulties in accepting Danish families having pets in their home when she first came to Denmark. Neither of the Turks interviewed finds it nice or acceptable to litter the common areas, however this does not seem to be such a big problem for them, even though the contrast between the very dirty and worn-out staircase and the very tidy Turkish homes inside the front door is big.

Another interesting contrast between the staircase and the inside of the Turkish home was observed at our arrival. The staircase looked as can be expected in a Danish social housing block from the 1970s. It was constructed in concrete, the floors were made in terrazzo, the walls were painted in typical 70s colours and 'decorated' by graffiti. When the family opened the front door, we entered quite another world. We felt we had gone directly to Ankara – the apartment was decorated with a lot of framed paintings and photos, Persian carpets covered the floors, curtains made of tulle covered the windows, small embroidered tablecloths decorated the television and the stereo etc. Later on in the interview we asked the family whether they felt the apartment was decorated in a Danish or a Turkish style. The answer was definite: "Danish. Only the carpets are a leftover from Turkish culture".

Concerning the dwellings and how Danish architectural ideas from the 1970s fit with the three families, they all seem to agree that the apartments as well as the facilities for shopping etc. are quite good. However, as a minor example of how the layout of the apartments may conflict with the Turkish norms, one of the families explains a problem concerning the location of the kitchen in relation to the rest of the house. This recently came into view when the husband's father died: The traditional way of mourning includes that the male part of the relatives gather together. However, because of the location of the kitchen the wife had to go through the living room many time that day, which felt wrong to both of them.

Concerning feeling at home in the neighbourhood, descriptions throughout the interview give the impression that the Danish family does not really feel at home in the area and feel that they are among strangers. This is also backed up when they describe how when they are at home, they most often draw the curtains so that they can forget the surroundings of their apartment. On the other hand the family also tells that they do say hello to most of their neighbours and think they are quite nice people. And they describe how many of the Turkish families in particular often sit together in the common area in summertime and have barbecues, which looks very cosy and they would like to be a part of this. Some of their immigrant neighbours have asked if they should do something together like these barbecues, however, the Danish family think that the Turks need to take more initiative and actually arrange something rather than just asking. Again, maybe because the Danish family feels like part of an ethnic minority in the area, they expect the Turks to take the initiative, and then they would be happy to be part of the activity. The same holds for many of the social clubs in the area. The wife has considered being part of a fitness group for instance, but she is afraid of being the only not-immigrant and feeling outside.

From the Turk interviews we also hear about the strong social relations between many of the Turks and they talk about this as very positive and a part of why they feel at home in the area. The man in one of the families says: *"When I walk in the streets I always meet someone I know, and we say hallo, that is very nice"*. This family, however, are about to leave the area, as they have bought a detached house. The most important reasons for moving out the area are economic (they want to invest money instead of paying rent) and that they need more space with three teenagers at home. However, the husband also explains that he thinks it is a problem that there are too few Danes in the area and that there is too much trouble and noise from young (second generation) immigrant children in the streets in the night. To the question of whether he feels insecure in the area he answers that everybody knows him, so he feels absolutely safe. Also from the other Turkish interviews we hear about the positive aspects of the social life among Turkish people living in the neighbourhood, people say hallo to each other like in the old days. The wife here has been very active in the local social life and she also explains that she feels absolutely safe as she knows everybody. Among other things she has arranged cleaning-up activities among the young (second generation) immigrants, as she also thinks the litter and garbage in the area is a problem. She explains that she feels like a fellow citizen (it is very important for her that we understand her correctly so she takes a Turkish-Danish dictionary and shows us the word 'medborger' = fellow citizen). She finds it important to do something in her local area, and this is the same whether she is in Turkey or in Denmark.

The three families agree that the biggest problems of their neighbourhood relate to the reputation and the state of the common areas combined with the social problems among some of the inhabitants. From the Turkish families we hear positive statements about the strong

social community among many of the Turks, however, from the Danish family we hear how this might add to the feeling of not being at home because the Danish family feels outside this community.

## **6. Conclusions**

In the following we will shortly summarize and conclude on the reviews and analyses presented in relation to the meaning of home in general, in relation to what this approach can contribute the field of immigrant studies and problems in deprived areas. Finally we will summarize what we have learned so far as the basis for our further studies in this field.

The literature review of immigrants and the meaning of home, together with our first qualitative analysis illustrates how the question of good housing is a cultural question which cannot be answered by objective categories such as size and sanitation standards. In this way the social construction approach to the meaning of home is confirmed. Furthermore the qualitative interviews in particular point towards the importance of feeling among followers in your neighbourhood as a very essential aspect of feeling at home. Thus the social environment can seem more important than the physical environment. The interviews with Turkish families point towards time and family relations as important factors for where to feel at home; the longer you have stayed in the country the more you feel at home, strengthened by family relations in the sense that one feels at home where one's family is. Both the question of being among followers and of being close to family become much more highlighted when studying immigrants, and in this way the immigrant perspective can help throw light on important aspects of the more general question of where to feel at home.

Focusing specifically on the question of what this type of research can contribute to issues regarding immigrants and housing problems, we would like to emphasise that the question of cleanliness, and of cultural differences in the understanding of cleanliness, might be incorporated in area-based strategies to solve conflicts in neighbourhoods with many immigrants. Furthermore the feeling among Danish families of being an ethnic minority group where the dominant ethnic culture should try to integrate Danes in their social life is an interesting approach. Finally our interviews also confirm what others have found, namely that a bad reputation for a neighbourhood can be quite a problem for those living in the area. They feel stigmatised and feel they have to defend to others why they live where they live, even though they do not necessarily feel that their neighbourhood deserves its bad reputation.

This paper represents the first step in a study and its main objective is to search for other relevant approaches and studies dealing with the same questions. Through the reviews we find that this subject is highly relevant and that further research is needed in the area. In the continuation of the project and in the further qualitative interviews we will continue the focus held so far, however we will also consider putting stronger focus on the importance of being among fellow countryman for the feeling of being at home, and the question of different cultural perceptions of cleanliness.

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